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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Global War on Terror

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Key stories in the media:  
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Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported on seemingly moderate gestures and pronouncements from Hamas vis-a-vis Israel. Ha'aretz reported that Hamas has been sending go-betweens to Israel recently with a proposed agreement for "quiet in return for quiet." Ha'aretz wrote that according to the proposal, conveyed to Israel by, among others, Egyptian envoys, Hamas would pledge not to carry out any violent actions against Israel and would even prevent other Palestinian organizations from doing so. Israel, for its part, would pledge by means of a third party not to take action against the organizations operating in the territories. Ha'aretz reported that Hamas is even prepared to declare a unilateral hudna (cease-fire), should Israel not want to appear to be maintaining contact with a body that calls for its destruction. According to this offer, Israel would respond with positive measures of its own. Ha'aretz said that political and defense officials in Israel define the initiative as a "trick." Israel Radio reported that Palestinian FM Mahmoud Zahar hinted in an interview with the British daily The Times that Hamas could be ready for a two-state solution. However, the radio quoted Zahar as saying in an interview with Al Arabiya-TV that attacks against Israel in the territories are legitimate. Ha'aretz reported that Hamas announced on Thursday that the ministers serving on its behalf in the new Palestinian government had resigned their membership in the organization and that others would inherit their posts in the movement. Ha'aretz quoted Hamas officials as saying informally that the organization had issued the statement in an effort to reduce the international pressure and economic siege on the PA government by presenting it as "separate" from Hamas. The Jerusalem Post reported that EU envoy Marc Otte told the newspaper that European leaders are likely to approve contacts with PA functionaries, even if they are affiliated with Hamas-led ministries, to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid.

Yediot reported that the Israeli defense establishment will recommend to Olmert that Israel conduct a dual policy vis-a-vis the PA: on the one hand, all daily contacts with the PA would be cut; on the other hand, Israel would provide humanitarian aid and basic supplies in order to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which would strengthen Hamas. Maariv reported that senior Israeli defense sources told the newspaper that Israel Discount Bank is the last Israeli bank still working with the PA. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Thursday, PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas decided to appoint Gen. Rashid Abu Shabak, one of his loyalists, to the newly created post of director-general of internal security. The Jerusalem Post said that this was yet another move to undermine the new Hamas cabinet.

All media reported that Qassam rocket launchings from the northern Gaza Strip are continuing. On Thursday, a Qassam rocket landed in the center of Sderot. The IDF responded with artillery fire, and air and naval strikes. The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that FIFA, the world soccer's governing body, has raised concerns with the GOI after the IDF targeted the main soccer stadium in the Gaza Strip with artillery fire.

The leading news web site Ynet and Israel Radio reported that on Thursday, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Department of the House of Representatives approved the "Palestinian Law Against Terror 2006," which bans the US from holding contacts with and giving aid that is not classified as humanitarian to the Hamas-controlled PA. The bill passed with a 36-2 vote. The bill gives Congress extended powers to make sure that American taxpayers' money doesn't reach "an authority controlled by a terror organization." Tough restrictions will be imposed on PA envoys in the U.S. Israel Radio quoted GOI sources as saying that Israel is satisfied with the move. Israel Radio quoted State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack as saying Thursday: "We're not going to provide US funds to a Hamas-led government. We don't deal with terrorists. We don't give money to terrorists.... We ... wanted to make sure that we retain the ability to provide humanitarian assistance directly to the Palestinian people."

The Jerusalem Post reported that a senior IDF officer told the newspaper on Thursday that fearing a harsh Israeli response, Syrian military forces stationed along the border with the Golan are under order to prevent Al-Qaida and Global Jihad cells from launching anti-Israel attacks from within Syria. Maariv quoted political sources in Jerusalem as saying that in talks that Syrian officials held with representatives of Western countries following the Israeli elections, they conveyed messages to Olmert -- peace in exchange for the Golan. Maariv quoted a senior political source in Jerusalem as saying that the Syrian offer sounds like a futile media spin.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman plans to fight Olmert's "convergence" plan from within the government coalition. Leading media reported that Shas is opposed to Olmert's plan to name Prof. Uriel Reichman (Kadima), the founder of the Shinui movement, to the post of education minister. Ha'aretz and other media reported that Olmert favors handing the justice portfolio to Haim Ramon (Kadima). Maariv quoted Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu as saying in private talks that former FM Silvan Shalom only waited for the election results to challenge his leadership. The newspaper reported that Acting PM Ehud Olmert told his associates that he wants Shalom and the Likud at his side in the government coalition. Ha'aretz reported that Shalom is planning a "putsch" within the Likud.

Israel Radio reported that settlers took over a house in the Hebron neighborhood of Avraham Avinu.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, the US House of Representatives passed a unanimous, non-binding resolution calling on Saudi Arabia to drop its boycott of Israel and that it urged the Bush administration to press the desert kingdom on the issue. The Jerusalem Post wrote that the resolution came in the wake of a report in last month's Jerusalem Post.

Leading media reported that on Thursday, a British court decided that British cinematographer James Miller, who was fatally shot in Gaza in May 2003 by an Israeli soldier, was murdered.

Ha'aretz (English Ed.) reported that US Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones and Mrs. Joan Jones, and Mexican Ambassador to Israel Carlos Rico, attended an event organized for a high-level delegation of Latin American leaders, academics, and journalists who arrived this week for a nine-day visit in Israel. The newspaper reported that the visit is sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and co-hosted by the National Council of La Raza [NB: The largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the US]. Leading the delegation is Dina Siegel Vann, a Jewish Mexican-American who serves as director of the AJC's Latino and Latin American Institute in Washington.

Yediot quoted Shimon Peres, No. 2 in Kadima, as saying in Rome that Pope Benedict XVI will visit Israel next

year.

Yediot reported that Israel and Turkey have decided to freeze the water agreement they signed three years ago, after concluding that it was not worthwhile.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Tactically, at this stage, the most important thing for Hamas is buying time."

Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Perhaps the people in Gaza will realize that Qassam rocket fire harms Gaza itself above all."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "With genuine concern for the well-being of ordinary Palestinians, the only way forward is for the West to ... not capitulate to Hamas's literally and figuratively bankrupt policies."

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in Ha'aretz: "Olmert wants a broad coalition base.... To this end, he is blurring the primary goal of his government in a shameful way."

Former US mediator Dennis Ross wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "[The US administration is ... likely to be open and encouraging about separation, seeing an Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank as an historic accomplishment."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "Buying Time"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 7): "While Israel and the US are trying to figure out what strategy to use vis-a-vis Hamas, the movement has already come up with a clear strategy of its own.... Tactically, at this stage, the most important thing for Hamas is buying time.... If quiet prevails, Hamas will be able to prevent domestic conflicts and a Palestinian civil war. In such a scenario, it will also be able to act more effectively vis-a-vis international players and to win their recognition. Therefore, there is no doubt that the movement will send intermediaries to Israel, with this message: We are prepared at this time to provide quiet to Israel and its inhabitants, and in return to get quiet from the Israeli side. This quiet will not be in the context of an agreement that outlines the obligations of the sides, but rather a quiet that Hamas can violate whenever it wants, just as when it used to defy understandings concerning truces with the PA in the past."

II. "A Hunger Bomb"

Regional correspondent Ronni Shaked wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 7): "Israeli shelling is making a lot of noise in the Gaza Strip, causing panic among the children, but the real concern of the inhabitants of Gaza is for bread, chicken, fish and vegetables, which no one has money to buy.... The real explosion threatening Gaza is not that of tanks or aircraft but of want and distress.... No one in Gaza is demanding that the rocket fire [into Israel] cease. Hamas spokesmen are encouraging the launchers to continue. The anarchy in Gaza is as it was, but like always, the Gazans, not only the leadership, but also the street, are blaming Israel. Who can stop the launching of the Qassam rockets? Abu Mazen and his security troops have no influence. The only address is that of the Hamas government. If [Prime Minister Ismail] Haniyeh wants to, he can do it easily enough. But they do not want to stop Qassam rocket fire, and the public, which is no longer affected by Israeli bombs, is busy with its own distress, with pita and hummus, not with rockets. If salaries are not paid within a week, there will be demonstrations and furious rioting in Gaza, perhaps against those who launch the rockets and against the

Hamas government. Then perhaps the people in Gaza will realize that Qassam rocket fire harms Gaza itself above all."

### III. "'Resistance' to Change"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (April 7): "With genuine concern for the well-being of ordinary Palestinians, the only way forward is for the West to hold firm, and not capitulate to Hamas's literally and figuratively bankrupt policies.... Given that both the US and Canada have already firmly committed to withholding aid until, or unless, Hamas revises its stand, it falls primarily to the European Union to evince a similar strength of conviction.... Assuredly, as the circumstances of the Palestinians deteriorate due to lack of funds, Hamas will urge its people to find strength in their suffering; that such is their destiny and that there is glory in their collective status as economic martyrs. It doesn't have to be that way. In fact, it is precisely to avoid condemning large numbers of Palestinians to such a fate in perpetuity that the international community must stay the course and continue to isolate Hamas until it changes its ways, or until the people who elected it as their government realize that it offers them no future."

### IV. "Olmert's First Lie"

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in Ha'aretz (April 7): "Olmert wants a broad coalition base (84 seats, without Meretz-Yahad). To this end, he is blurring the primary goal of his government in a shameful way. The first sign of this distortion was in his victory speech, when the keyword -- 'convergence' - disappeared. It will also not appear in the basic guidelines of the government. Haim Ramon from Kadima explains in his tortuous way that 'the word will disappear, but not the content.' Who exactly are they trying to blind? Ramon, as the courtyard prompter, explains that Olmert has clearly said that there will be concessions of parts of the homeland. So he said it. Even Netanyahu gave up on parts of the homeland, in Hebron. What Olmert promised was something else entirely -- convergence toward permanent borders within four years. In order to do that, a lot of homeland territory will need to be given up. The participation of Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party and Shas in the coalition, without an explicit commitment to honor the convergence plan, will lead to one of two outcomes -- withdrawal from the convergence, or giving up on Yisrael Beiteinu and Shas as coalition partners after they get all the spoils."

### IV. "What Olmert Can Expect From Bush"

Former US mediator Dennis Ross wrote in The Jerusalem Post (April 7): "In discussions with the United States, the new Israeli government will seek tangible recognition of the settlement blocs and the 'permanent borders that Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has declared he plans to establish by 2010.... What is the Bush administration likely to do? It is -- as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has already

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indicated -- likely to be open and encouraging about separation, seeing an Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank as an historic accomplishment. But no one should assume that such talks between the new Israeli government and the administration will be quick or easy.... If it is clear that Abu Mazen cannot deliver anything meaningful, we [the US] should be prepared that we (and others) will support separation and will recognize the new borders as political."

### 12. Global War on Terror:

#### Summary:

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The Bush administration today is bogged down in a swamp of strategic paralysis and political distress that prevent it from designing clear policies regarding the war against global jihad."

Block Quotes:

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"The Rise of the Islamic Axis"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (April 7): "For more than two years, the Israeli government and media have told the public that no matter how our enemies threaten us, they can do us no harm because America is protecting us. Protected by America, Israelis are told that we have no reason to fear the consequences of IDF retreats and the transfer of vacated lands to Hamas. Sadly, this promise is largely untrue. The Bush administration today is bogged down in a swamp of strategic paralysis and political distress that prevent it from designing clear policies regarding the war against global jihad.... The members of the Iran-led Islamist axis are actively pursuing and indeed progressing in their quest to encircle Israel and entrap the US. This they accomplish -- both separately and together -- while Israel and the US insist on doing everything they can to prevent any possibility of effectively meeting the rising threats. There is no doubt that the political leadership of at least one of these states has to snap out of its policy fog immediately. Our enemies have no consideration for our desire to ignore them."

JONES